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Kennedy's Big Dilemma: Rebel Camps

Shall He Reactivate Them? Debate Rages

By David Wise

WASHINGTON, Apr. 25.—President Kennedy is faced with a major dilemma in the wake of the ill-starred Cuban invasion: whether to reopen training camps for anti-Castro Cubans within the United States.

The problem is now being debated within the highest levels of the Administration. No conclusion has been reached.

Meanwhile, White House press secretary Pierre Salinger said today that the possibility of a total embargo on trade with Cuba was under consideration by the Administration. Exports to Cuba are now restricted to medical and other essentials but Cuba is still sending $70,000,000 a year in goods to the United States.

The Open Secret

It is an open secret, although never officially admitted, that Cuban rebels were armed, trained and prepared for last week's unsuccessful invasion of their homeland in camps in the United States, and in Central America. The operation was directed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Location of these camps has never been officially revealed nor has the Administration admitted their existence. However the camps were reportedly located in Florida, Louisiana, and Guatemala. Pictures of rebels training in these camps were widely distributed to news media in the past several months, although the location of the camps was never pinpointed.

However, it was learned that at least one major training camp was situated in the Florida Everglades. Another was said to have been located at Homestead, Fla., south of Miami. And several months ago "The Miami Herald" reported that a supposedly abandoned Marine Corps Air Station at Opa-Locka, northwest of Miami, was being used as a base to ferry Cuban rebels and supplies in and out of the United States.

The Dilemma

Against this background, the dilemma facing the President is this:

If the camps are re-opened it will be difficult—probably impossible—to keep their locations and operations secret. The reason is that the C. I. A. can no longer count on co-operation by local newspapers. Some papers are believed to have looked the other way at the camps, in the belief that publicity might have been detrimental to the national interest.

Now that the C. I. A.'s role is out in the open, at least to an extent, the Administration cannot expect the newspapers would continue to co-operate in playing down news about the camps. In an open society like the United States it would be very difficult indeed to keep the locations of the camps secret.

If the President elects to reactivate the camps openly, however, or if they are publicized, the United States will risk adverse reaction by world opinion.

Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev would be sure to issue propaganda blasts about Cuban rebels training on United States soil.

On the other hand, if the camps are not reopened, how can anti-Castro Cubans be trained for any possible future moves against Cuba? Intelligence-[illegible] power.

formed sources say that virtually all of the trained rebel forces were captured or wiped out last week.

There is great doubt that the camps can be established in Central America in the wake of last week's fiasco. Reportedly, Guatemalan President Miguel Ydigoras was becoming increasingly skittish just before the invasion about use of his country to train rebel forces. He is believed to have placed pressure on the rebels to get out of Guatemala—fast.

The situation is complicated by the fact that Premier Castro holds hostage hundreds of Cuban rebels. He has hinted that they will be executed if further operations are organized against Cuba by the United States. The implications is that if the camps are reactivated, Castro might shoot his prisoners and blame Washington.

This, then, is the scope of the problem being debated inside the Administration in the wake of last week's expedition that failed. While no decision has been reached, the balance of opinion is said to be leaning, if ever so slightly, against the reopening of any training camps for the rebels on United States soil.

It is President Kennedy, however, who will have to make the final, grave decision.

Alfange Makes Plea

A plea to Greek shipowners to refrain from shipping oil or dry cargo to Cuba while Fidel Castro's regime remains in power was made yesterday by Dean Alfange, chairman of the American Hellenic Congress.

Mr. Alfange said the action was in support of President Kennedy's "strong stand on Cuba and against Communist infiltration in the Western Hemisphere." He noted that his appeal was a result of a resolution adopted by the board of directors of the American Hellenic Congress.

The resolution read: "Resolved that the American Hellenic Congress commend the President of the United States for his strong stand on Cuba an against Communist infiltration in the Western Hemisphere and support him in his crisis by calling on all Greek shipowners, irrespective of their citizenship and the flags they fly, to refrain from shipping oil or dry cargo to Cuba while the Castro regime is in power."

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